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The Teutonic Order and the Baltic Crusades

By

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Senior Seminar: Hst 499

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June 5, 2019

Readers

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Introduction

When people think of Crusades, they often think of the wars in the Holy Lands rather than regions inside of Europe, which many believe to have already been Christian. The Baltic Crusades began during the Second Crusade (1147-1149) but continued well into the fifteenth century. Unlike the crusades in the Holy Lands which were initiated to retake holy cities and pilgrimage sites, the Baltic crusades were implemented by the German archbishoprics of Bremen and Magdeburg to combat pagan tribes in the Baltic region which included Estonia, Prussia, Lithuania, and Latvia.[1] The Teutonic Order, which arrived in the Baltic region in 1226, was successful in their smaller initial campaigns to combat raiders, as well as in their later crusades to conquer and convert pagan tribes. As an Order that focused on Eastern Europe and the Baltic, the Teutonic Order had to balance their relationship between both the papacy and other Christian kingdoms near the region, particularly the Holy Roman Empire. The Teutonic Order successfully balanced the support of the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy, to become a powerful theocratic state carrying out a mission of conquest and conversion in the Baltic region. The Teutonic Order, despite its success through the Baltic crusades, would eventually fail in the sixteenth century against a coalition of Mongol, Russian, and Turkish forces. After this defeat the Order became purely a secular in the Baltic region, ceasing involvement in crusading in 1525.[2]

When people think of the Teutonic Order, they often imagine German crusaders fighting in the name of the church. However, this is not necessarily the case as the Teutonic Order had complex ties with both the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, the homeland to many of the

[1] For map of Baltic region, refer to Appendix Figure 1.
[2] William Urban, *The Teutonic Knights a Military History* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2018), 256.

Teutonic Knights. Additionally, as the Order began to relocate from the Holy Lands to the Baltic in 1226, political interactions between the Teutonic Order and both the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire increased. Despite these positive external relations for the Order, the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire remained in a political war with one another, with the Emperor Friedrich II being excommunicated by the pope. Amongst historians there are conflicting interpretations regarding the relationships between the Teutonic Order, the Holy Roman Empire, the papacy, and the effect those relationships had on the establishment of the Teutonic Order as a theocratic state.

Historiography

Scholars specializing in the Teutonic Order, like other historical fields, argue and dispute the success of the Teutonic Order in the Baltic Region, especially with regard to their methods and reasons for crusading. Scholars such as Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt, Kaspar Klavins, and Eric Christiansen interpret the presence of the Order in the Baltic as a negative influence, impacting politics in the region. While initially the Order maintained their loyalty to the church, eventually their freedom of activity in the Baltic led the knights to become independent and power driven, driving them astray from their stated mission of conversion. Other scholars such as William Urban and Nicholas Morton assess the external influences on the Order. These scholars argue that those positive external connections allowed the Order to expand in power and influence, which brought about the eventual conversion of the Baltic.

Political ties in the Baltic were a defining factor of the Baltic Crusades and the Teutonic Order. Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt in *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades 1147-1254* explains the

power struggle between the papacy and other secular powers in the Baltic region.[3] During the Baltic crusades, before the introduction of the Teutonic Order in the region, the Christian forces, although on the same side, did not all answer to the same leaders. This separation of leadership made it difficult to amass a force large enough to actually crusade. Popes would therefore grant authority or power to specific individuals instead, in order to bring different forces in the region together under the banner of crusade.[4] This authority could easily change from one leader to another depending on the confidence the pope had in that individual. This action was not unique to a singular pope but rather an approach taken consecutively by many consecutive popes during the Baltic crusades. In 1226, the pope granted such authority to the Teutonic Order rather than to any specific individual, since the Order's purpose for being in the region was crusade.[5] This role would further expand with the papacy endorsing the Teutonic Order as a theocratic state in 1230.

These changes in authority granted by the church to the Order led increasingly to conflict as the Teutonic Order was no longer solely under the control of the papacy but had become its own theocratic state. Kaspar Klavins in *The Ideology of Christianity and Pagan Practice among the Teutonic Knights: The Case of the Baltic Region* also looks at the political relations with the church and the Teutonic Order as having negative aspects as well.[6] When the Teutonic Order became its own theocratic state, it retained the lands it had taken, therefore keeping the taxes and income of the towns and people living there from members of the clergy which had their own taxes and properties. This changing of power in the region resulted in a situation where, "the archbishops proved increasingly adept at winning over the sympathy of the papacy and setting it

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[3] Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt, *Popes and the Baltic Crusades, 1147-1254* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 187.
[4] Fonnesberg-Schmidt, *Popes and the Baltic Crusades*, 188.
[5] Ibid., 189.
[6] Kaspar Klavins, "The Ideology of Christianity and Pagan Practice among the Teutonic Knights: The Case of the Baltic Region," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 37, no.3 (2006): 260-268.

against the Order."[7] This change of power in the Baltic further fractured the relations between the Order and the clergy operating in the Baltic.

This change led to political disputes between the Teutonic Order and the papacy. Christiansen in *The Northern Crusades* explains these disputes by describing the conflicts that emerged between bishops in the Baltic and the Teutonic Order.[8] Christiansen explains, "in 1253, the see of Riga was raised to an archbishopric and given to Albert Suerbeer, who as legate and archbishop of Prussia had been fighting to reduce the power of the Order for the previous six years."[9] The creation of a new archbishopric was significant as the relationship between the church and the Order was no longer a partnership but rather a competition for power in the Baltic, with each competing for influence in the region. While Fonnesberg-Schmidt details the trust that the papacy had in the Teutonic Order, she also describes the authority granted to the Order in 1226 as a direct response to permissions given by the Holy Roman Empire in 1226. Fonnesberg-Schmidt asserts that, "with the so-called Golden Bull of Rimini of March 1226, its master became an imperial prince for the province of Kulmerland and all land conquering in the future in Prussia."[10] This new imperial title is important as it explains how the Order was not just a power beholden to the papacy but to the Holy Roman Empire as well.

Politics facing the Teutonic Order, while having negative aspects for their success in the Baltic, also had redeeming factors. Nicholas Morton in *The Teutonic Knights in the Holy Land 1190-1291* emphasizes these redeeming factors by telling how the Teutonic Order was created at the political urging of German crusaders in the Holy Lands in 1190.[11] Morton digs further into

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[7] Klavins, "Christian and Pagan Practice," 270.
[8] Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades* (London: Penguin Group, 1997), 127.
[9] Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*, 128.
[10] Fonnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes and the Baltic,* 203-204.
[11] Nicholas Morton, *The Teutonic Knights in the Holy Land, 1190-1291* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), 24.

these political ties with the Holy Roman Empire and the relationship held with Emperor Friedrich II, who granted them privileges to take any land conquered in Prussia. This agreement with the Holy Roman Empire allowed the Teutonic Order to become its own theocratic state, and the Master of the Order to hold the title of Imperial Prince. David Nicolle furthers describes the political benefits of the Teutonic Order becoming its own state. This autonomy allowed the Order to govern itself and to conduct its own negotiations and war, without the church constantly looking over their shoulder and dictating all of their actions. This independence as a state allowed for closer political ties with not only the Holy Roman Empire but other neighboring kingdoms like Poland and Hungary.[12] These kingdoms were the first to give the Teutonic Knights a mandate to operate in the region.

Political ties in the Baltic consisted of more than just diplomatic relations between countries; such ties were also an important component in the public image the Order projected to the peoples of these countries. An essential contribution to the success of the Order was its use of chivalry, which was the just and Christian way of conducting war.[13] William Urban in *The Teutonic Knight and Baltic Chivalry* explains the importance of politics and chivalry to the Order and its continued existence as a monastic military order.[14] Chivalry as an ideal was essential for recruiting knights and lords to crusade in the Baltic as it demonstrated honor and an organization that was pure in its intent to wage war. This chivalrous image, along with the same rewards given for crusading in the Holy Lands, brought in crusaders from the whole of Europe. This idea of crusading is best described by Riley-Smith as, "packaged crusading."[15]

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[12] David Nicolle, *Teutonic Knight: 1190-1561* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2007), 30.
[13] William Urban, "The Teutonic Knight and Baltic Chivalry," *The Historian* 56, no. 3 (1994): 520.
[14] Urban, "Baltic Chivalry," 521.
[15] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades a History* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 263.

Chivalry showed knights and lords that the Order could be trusted with leading a crusade, crusades which were dependent on those said knights and lords to fill the armies necessary to success.

The Teutonic Order remains a disputed subject, allowing many different scholars to arrive at different conclusions. Some scholars, like Christiansen, Fonnesberg-Schmidt, and Klavins, believe that the complex politics faced by the Order negatively impacted the Order's influence and ability to crusade in the Baltic. Other scholars, such as Urban and Morton, interpret the connections between the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy as being positive for the Teutonic Order, helping it to expand the Crusades in the Baltic.

Primary Sources

Primary source material on the Teutonic Order is not especially difficult to come across, however, sources translated from German and Latin to English are uncommon since research on the Teutonic Order is mainly based in Europe. Despite the scarcity of these translations, there is still much to learn about the Order from these translated documents. The types of documents used in this paper primarily consist of letters and chronicles. These sources were written between the ninth and fourteenth centuries, during the time of Church involvement in the Baltic. This Christian intervention started in the ninth century; the Teutonic involvement starting in the thirteenth century. Each of these sources was created by a priest or chronicler of either the Latin or Orthodox churches, meaning each of the sources is translated from either Latin, Old Russian, or Middle High German. Many of these sources also had multiple writers, spanning hundreds of years to keep the history of their area, adding different authors' interpretations of situations to events that their predecessors may have recorded. These sources held a favorable bias towards

any means of Christian conversion which took place in the Baltic region. Christian authors looked at these missionary activities as God's work. Clergy also viewed the traditions and cultural norms of the indigenous peoples in a negative light.

The precise beginning of Christianity in the Baltic and the specific involvement of missionaries and early crusaders is unknown. While the exact date of these attempts is unknown, the *Chronicle of the Slavs* gives the earliest telling of those endeavors.[16] Helmold (1120-1170), a priest in Bosau, Germany, a city on the edge of the Baltic and Northern regions, authored this chronicle, which covers the period 800-1177. Multiple writers completed the records prior to Helmold's and covered the attempts to convert the local inhabitants to Christianity, all of which were written in Latin. This source is assumed to have been written as a history for the conversion efforts in the region, as well as a means for new missionaries in the region to learn more of past efforts and the cultures they were attempting to convert. As a chronicle, this source gives an historical account of facts in chronological order by major events by year, often including references to local events alongside events of historical renown. In the chronicle, Helmold explains the religious situation in the Baltic. He viewed the Russians as fellow Christians but observed that they tried to imitate the Greeks rather than Helmold's own Latin beliefs; he refers to the Russians' religion as Orthodox Christianity.[17] As the earliest mentioning of Christian involvement in the Baltic, this source is generally accepted, despite the negative bias the priest exhibited towards the indigenous peoples and their pagan religions. This chronicle is important as it gives some of the earliest information available of early conversion in the Baltic region.

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[16] Helmold, *The Chronicle of the Slavs*, trans. Francis Joseph Tschan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935).
[17] Helmold, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 46.

A significant text exploring the rhetoric behind conquering the Baltic is the *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle*, written by an unknown author and covering the period between 1180 and 1343; the chronicle was written in Middle High German.[18] The chronicle was written to be read to knights of the Baltic crusades usually during meals so that they could nourish not only their bodies but their spirits as well.[19] This source shows the mentality and reasonings behind why the Christians believed they should crusade. To encourage crusaders, the chronicle gave examples of pagans converting to Christianity and their evil pagan cousins fearing the increase in Christian numbers, massacring villages known to have converted leaving thousands dead.[20] This source has a sizeable number of errors as it was written to inspire the crusaders to action. Therefore, many events in the chronicle are either exaggerated or pure propaganda with no real association with the events occurring in the region. Many crusaders joined the crusades to not only save the souls of the pagans in the North but also to save their own souls in the process. The *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle* mentioned many times that the pope and therefore God would forgive any sins for the time spent crusading and that the killing of any pagan towards this goal would be forgiven.[21] This chronicle displays the propaganda used by the church to encourage the crusaders and conversion in the Baltic region.

The Latin Christians were not the only sect of Christianity involved in the Baltic region. In the *Chronicle of Novgorod*, the relationship between the Latin and Orthodox churches in the Baltic is explored.[22] This chronicle, written by multiple monks of the Yuriev Monastery in

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[18] *The Livonian Rhymed Chronicle*, trans. Jerry C.Smith and William L. Urban (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1977).
[19] Ibid., 12.
[20] Ibid., *5*.
[21] Ibid., 7.
[22] *The Chronicle of Novgorod 1016-1471*, trans. Robert Michell and Nevill Forbes (London: Camden, 1914).

Novgorod, Russia, covers the history of the Russian principality known as Novgorod. The oldest comprehensive history of Novgorod, the chronicle covers the periods between 1016-1471 and gives an overall history of the nation, including significant events involving royals and their effects on Novgorod. It also details the indigenous people of the Baltic as well as the Teutonic Order's involvement, beginning as allies to the Russians in their conflicts against the pagans, then after conversion becoming enemies.[23]

A significant part of understanding Teutonic involvement in the Baltic requires looking into *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, written by Henricus Lettis, a priest believed to be born in Germany around 1180.[24] This source covers 1180-1227 in the Baltic and surrounding regions. This chronicle is important as it describes the use of merchants and political envoys in crusading armies. Lettis' inclusion of merchants and political envoys is essential as it differs from other primary sources used; none of which describes the importance of both the merchants and diplomats in the Baltic crusades. Having these types of people within the ranks of the crusaders supports the idea that crusaders were not only interested in Christianizing the region but also in exploiting the region for gain in political and economic power.

Analysis utilized using these sources provides a better understanding of how the combination of the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy influenced the Teutonic Order. These influences had a profound effect on the actions of the Order in the Baltic, evolving from operating in singular outposts, to becoming a theocratic state with dual ties to both the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy.

Historical Background

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[23]*Chronicle of Novgorod*, 28.
[24]Henricus Lettis, *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, trans. James A. Brundage (United States: Columbia University Press, 2004).

To be a Teutonic Knight, an individual had to be dedicated not only to the life of a warrior but to that of a friar. Friars are similar to monks in that they are devoted to a religious life. The difference is that a friar lives and works among regular people in society, while a monk lives in a secluded, self-sufficient group of monks.[25] In the Teutonic Order, an initiate had to pass preliminary examinations by which one must first be ordained as a friar and then a knight. It was during this period of training as a friar and then a knight that the Order would decide whether an initiate had the calling to devote their lives to the Order.[26] After being deemed worthy by the Order, the novitiate would then be inducted into the Order with the oath, "I promise the chastity of my body, and poverty, and obedience to God, Holy Mary, and to you the Master of Teutonic Order, and your successors, according to the rules and practices of the Order, obedience unto death."[27] With this vow the new knight of the Teutonic Order was initiated. These vows and traditions not only ensured that a knight was completely devoted to the Order but also to the ideal for which the Order stood, which was the expansion and protection of Christendom. The warrior friars of the Order, despite their involvement in the Baltic region, were not the first religious men to try and convert the region.

The Teutonic Order began as a minor order consisting of German knights and monks protecting and healing at hospitals in the port city of Acre in the Holy Lands, similar to the creation of the other major monastic military orders like the Templars and Hospitallers.[28] At this time in 1190, they were known as the Teutonic Hospital. Over several years the Order began to grow as more German knights began to join the crusades, not finding places amongst the

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[25] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v."Friar," accessed May 08, 2019, https://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/90670

[26] William Urban, *The Teutonic Knights a Military History* (Barnsley: Frontline Books), 18.

[27] Nicolle, *Teutonic Knight 1190-1561*, 22.

[28] Acre is located in modern day Israel.

Templars or Hospitallers due to different culture and language.[29] After the Third Crusade in which a large portion of the force was German and affiliated with the Holy Roman Empire, the crusade commanders recommended changing the Teutonic Hospital into a militarized order as well. In 1198, the papacy granted this request, and through the help of the papacy, Holy Roman Empire, and other established monastic military orders, the new Teutonic Order was given funds and the chance to expand and become a major contributor to the keeping of the Holy Lands.[30]

The Holy Lands during the thirteenth century was the Teutonic Order's main theatre of operation, however requests from Hungary allowed for the first Teutonic involvements in Europe. The Kingdom of Hungary, unable to cope with pagan Cuman raids in the countryside, eventually requested the Teutonic Order to assist in 1211.[31] The Cumans were a nomadic people originally situated in Eurasia, who began their interference in Hungary after being displaced by the Mongol Horde in the early thirteenth century.[32] The Teutonic Order was allowed into the Burzenland, which is modern day Transylvania, to combat the Cuman raids. After successful expansions into pagan Cuman lands and fortification of conquered lands, the Order was expelled from Hungary in 1225 as the nobility were concerned about the power of the Order within their kingdom.[33] After being dismissed from Hungary, the Order quickly discovered new opportunities in the Baltic region.

The Baltic region has a long history of conflict with Christian kingdoms prior to the arrival of the Teutonic Order. Pagan raids in Christian lands over several centuries eventually led

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[29] Morton, *Teutonic Holy Lands,* 1.
[30] Morton, *Teutonic Holy Lands*, 13.
[31] Kyra Lyublyanovics, "The Cumans in Medieval Hungary and the Question of Ethnicity," *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* (2011), 153.
[32] Lyublyanovics, "Cumens in Hungary," 153.
[33] Armin Vambery and Louise Heilprin, *The Story of Hungary* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1886), 130.

to the Wendish Crusade in 1147. Many of the initial pagan raids were initiated by tribes in Prussia, the closest region to the Christian territory. The social system used by tribes in Prussia revolved around the warrior as the highest status in society. By raiding into Christian lands to gather slaves, warriors not only distinguished themselves in battle but also made a profit through selling the slaves to other tribes. Raiding therefore boosted their own reputations as warriors.[34] By the twelfth century, Christians viewed war with the Prussians as a necessity, as trying to peacefully convert them was very unlikely because of the constant raids between Christian and pagan forces during the late twelfth century.[35] This crusade consisted of forces including Jutland (Denmark), Scandinavia, Kingdom of Poland, and the Holy Roman Empire.[36] This force, however, used the premise of crusade as a means to invade and take land for their individual kingdoms. While the crusade was successful, it only converted a small region of the Baltic.

Religious conversion attempts in the Baltic region began centuries before the involvement of the Teutonic Order. In *The Chronicle of the Slavs,* written around 900 A.D, Helmold describes the efforts of the missionaries and their mission, "For many days and very many years the missionaries labored to their utmost among these peoples; but so deep was the darkness of their errors and so obstinate their rank idolatry that it could be neither promptly nor easily overcome."[37] Helmold describes the indigenous peoples as deeply misled by their pagan beliefs, indicating that their society was so steeped in their own religion that it was very difficult to convert any of the indigenous peoples. The pagan beliefs of the people of the Baltic revolved around the concept of a war god, who influenced their society profoundly encouraging warlike

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[34] Urban, *The Teutonic Knights*, 45.
[35] Tiina Kala, "The Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands into the Western Christian World," *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier 1150-1500* (Hampshire:Ashgate, 2001), 8.
[36] Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*, 54.
[37] Helmold, *The Chronicle of the Slavs*, 57.

behaviors. The information regarding pagan belief in the Baltic is scarce, as prior to pagan conversion to Christianity the tribes had no written language. However, scholars such as Algirdas Greimas have determined that the Baltic peoples had a complete pantheon of gods and spirits which were involved in all aspects of life, ranging from agriculture and fertility to war and revenge.[38] In the eyes of the Christians however, they were worshipping the devil.

In the early thirteenth century pagan raids into Polish territory were increasing, often with Poland conducting its own raids in retaliation. The trading of conflicts in Poland only became more frequent and costly. In the early thirteenth century, the Prussians began to invade Christian lands with more determination but still poorly armed and organized warriors, either provoked by Poland's attempts to take the regions and convert them, or from a desire for war and the reputations and slaves to be gained.[39] These attacks eventually led not only to the involvement of Poles and Pomeranians but also to aid from the Holy Roman Empire. Involvement of other Christian countries resulted in continued raids across the borders of the Baltic and Christian lands. These raids and the Christian kingdoms' inability to properly defeat them led to the involvement of the Teutonic Knights.

Many of the initial pagan raids were initiated by tribes in Prussia, the closest region to the Christian territory. The social system used by tribes in Prussia revolved around the warrior as the highest status in society. By raiding into Christian lands to gather slaves, warriors not only distinguished themselves in battle but also made a profit through selling the slaves to other tribes. Raiding therefore boosted their own reputations as warriors. By the twelfth century, Christians viewed war with the Prussians as a necessity, as trying to peacefully convert them was very

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[38] Greimas Algirdas, *Of Gods and Men: Studies in Lithuanian Mythology* (New York: Indiana University Press, 1992), 5.
[39] Urban, *The Teutonic Knights,* 35.

unlikely because of the constant raids between Christian and pagan forces during the late twelfth century.

Political Ties between the Teutonic Order and the Holy Roman Empire

Through their political connections to the papacy and other nations, the Teutonic Order was able to not only fund themselves but also use those connections to expand their mission to convert the Baltic lands. These political ties, stretching through Europe from England to Italy, brought much needed manpower into the Baltic region. The most important political tie that the Teutonic Order nurtured, however, was their relationship with the Holy Roman Empire, from which most of their funding and knights originated.

The Order in the Baltic became more independent, even securing itself as an autonomous monastic state, which had its own currency and government in 1226 but was only approved and allowed by Papal See in 1230. Modern historian Nicholas Morton explains how intertwined the Teutonic Order was with the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy, both prior to abandoning the Holy Lands after its fall to the Mamluks in 1291, and later when the Teutonic Knights focused on the Baltic Region.[40] The Order aligned with the papacy because of their duty to God and therefore the Church, and with the Holy Roman Empire because it was their knights' homeland and their most important benefactor in the Baltic region.

The strongest advocate for the Teutonic Order in the Baltic region was Emperor Friederich II (1194-1250) of the Holy Roman Empire. During Friederich's reign, he first supported the Teutonic Order in the Holy Lands with donations of funds and lands for the Order to occupy and use, in exchange for the Order's participation in his crusades into the Holy Lands

[40] Morton, *The Holy Lands,* 119.

and support in political issues with the papacy.[41] This relationship would change in the Baltic region, with the Order providing security from Prussian raiders and the Empire giving funds and political support. Friederich himself had very complicated ties with the papacy, with the Holy Roman Empire and papacy even going to war in 1254.[42]

Emperor Friederich II did not view the Roman Church favorably, perceiving the pope and his servants as liars, more concerned about material wealth and power than in embodying God's will. According to a letter sent by Friederich to all the lords of Europe in 1246, the church was threatening the authority of all monarchical rulers with its excommunication of Friederich and the reasoning for his sentencing. "What is implied by our maltreatment is made plain by the presumption of Pope Innocent IV for, having summoned a council--he has declared to pronounce a sentence of deposition against us who were neither summoned nor proved guilty of any deceit or wickedness, which sentence he could not enact without grievous prejudice to all kings."[43] The source of the pope's condemnation was political, beginning with a brief battle between rebels under the command of the Cardinal Ranieri of the local church of Viterbo, an essential castle of Friederichs near Rome in 1243.[44] Pope Innocent IV, after ensuring the rebels would surrender, had Friederich remove his garrison so the rebels could surrender unharmed. Those same rebel forces then attacked and slaughtered the garrison of the city of Viterbo.[45] Shortly after, the Pope, along with Cardinal Ranieri, declared Emperor Friederich II to be a heretic and not worthy of the title of emperor, and he was thus excommunicated. This event enraged Friederich and he

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[41] Morton, *The Holy Lands,* 120.
[42] John P. Adams, "Sede Vacante 1254,"Sede Vacante 1254, California State University Northridge, accessed May 18, 2019, https://www.csun.edu/~hcfll004/SV1254.html.
[43] "Letter of Frederick to the Kings of Christendom, 1246." *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*. Accessed June 3, 2019.
[44] "Letter of Frederick."
[45] For map showing territories of the Holy Roman Empire and papacy refer to Appendix Figure 2.

marshalled his own army to march on Pope Innocent and Cardinal Ranierie, both of which who fled to France. Under the protection of the French king, reaching them was impossible without war. With this development Friederich addressed a letter to the numerous kings of Europe which explained how distrustful the papacy was, declaring the papacy false in its accusations of the emperor being a sinner. Friederich labelled this blatant sentencing as an affront that all kings should be insulted by, as at any time these accusations might be made against them. Despite the dangerous relations between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, connections between the Holy Roman Empire and the Teutonic Order remained beneficial.

Relations between the Holy Roman Empire and papacy in regard to the Teutonic Order expanded but also became more complicated during the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries.[46] Reliance on the Holy Roman Empire became much more apparent as the Order began to move into the Baltic region where closer bonds and borders with the Holy Roman Empire became essential for new recruits, funding, and political support became essential to the Order as an institution.[47] The political alliance with the Holy Roman Empire was pivotal to the Order. Without those ties, the Order's objective in the Baltic would have been more difficult to achieve, without the money to support and feed their troops or the weapons to arm their soldiers,

The Order's close ties with other kingdoms was entirely necessary to its survival and continued participation in the Baltic. Urban explains in *The Teutonic Knights and Baltic Chivalry* that without delegations of crusaders from kingdoms such as France, Poland, Prussia, Bohemia, England, and the Holy Roman Empire, the feats that the Order accomplished likely would not have been possible.[48] King John of Bohemia (1296-1346) was one such crusader; he made three

[46] "Letter of Frederick."
[47] Morton, *The Holy Lands*, 17.
[48] Urban, "Baltic Chivalry," 519.

different expeditions into Prussia with various princes.[49] King John viewed the crusaders as a force for good in the region as shown in a charter he published on the Order in 1329 after his third crusade into the Baltic:

> their praiseworthy state and their memorable holiness of life and worship attract us; they suffer heavy and unbearable labours and expenses for the extension of the orthodox faith, and have made themselves into an unbreakable wall to defend the faith against the Lithuanians and their partisans, whoever they may be - pestilential enemies of Christ! - as we have seen ourself; everyday they expose themselves fearlessly to danger and death, hemmed in, divided, hopelessly slaughtered and afflicted.[50]

The Teutonic Order's ability to gather the recruits and funds necessary to wage crusades was due to charters such as these, in which the Order helped with a lord's need for crusade and convinced those lords that their ideal for crusade was chivalrous, resulting in a public endorsement of the Order. These nations and their lords contributed not only knights and soldiers, but money and good reputation to feed the Teutonic Order's expansion. This relationship with the Holy Roman Empire facilitated treaties and alleviated pressures from other nations involved in the region, as the Holy Roman Empire was dominant compared to any other power in the Baltic.

The Order's relations in the Baltic region first began with the duchy of Masovia. Konrad of Masovia called on the Teutonic Order to defend the borders against pagan Prussians raiders. The Duke of Masovia called for outside aid as the countries bordering the Baltic regions of Prussia and Livonia were unable to keep the raids from the indigenous tribes under check. The Teutonic Order responded to the raiding in Masovia in 1226, as the Order was the closest monastic military order to Poland with facilities in the Holy Roman Empire.[51] Historically an independent duchy and then after 1526, a lordship within the Polish kingdom, Masovia lay in

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[49] Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*, 155.
[50] Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*, 156.
[51] Zdzislaw Zygulski, "Knightly Arms – Plebian Arms,"The Society for Medieval Military History, Wordpress. accessed March 20th, 2019. https://deremilitari.org/2014/07/knightly-arms-plebian-arms/.

mid-north-eastern Poland, including the cities of Warsaw, Raga, and Plock.[52] Masovia welcomed intervention from the Teutonic Order as the Order possessed experienced fighting forces, with experience in combat since their founding in Acre in 1198.

The Order realized the area within the duchy in which they were operating, Cumberland, was an effective base from which to attack pagans in the Baltic. Konrad's request therefore continued to benefit the Order after the campaign in Masovia; if they kept that castle in the Cumberland they would launch more crusades in the future as well as expanding their Order. The Cumberland territory was then officially granted to the Teutonic Order in 1226 by the Holy Roman Empire, despite the misgivings of Konrad of Masovia, who would eventually dismiss them from the duchy for having too much power in the region.[53]

The kingdom of Poland and the duchy of Masovia were not the only states encountering difficulties with pagan raiders. The Holy Roman Empire, noticing how effective the Order was at containing the pagan raiders in Masovia, began to assist the Order. After meeting with the Order's Grand Master Hermann Von Salza, the Holy Roman Empire declared the Golden Bull of Rimini in 1226, authorized by Emperor Friedrich II. This bull gave authorization to commence war against the pagans in Prussia in 1226.[54]

The Golden Bull granted the Emperor's permission to the Order to operate in this region, with the support of the Holy Roman Empire's military. The Bull also authorized the Teutonic Order to take any territory that the Holy Roman Empire had not previously claimed as well as to

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[52] "Duchy of Masovia". Revolvy. Accessed June 8, 2019. https://www.revolvy.com/page/Duchy-of-Masovia.
[53] Morton, *The Holy Lands,* 64.
[54] "Summary of the Golden Bull of Rimini, March 1226," Internet Medieval Sourcebook, Fordham University, accessed March 17th, 2019, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/12-13Cbalticcrusade.asp#_Toc378084754

retain any territory previously promised to the Order by the Duke of Masovia, the region of Culm.[55] In the bull, the emperor also proclaimed,

> He also gives the brothers his imperial rights over mountains, plains, rivers, woods and the sea, which they will hold free of all service and exaction and they will be held to reply to no one. When they have conquered the land they can take tolls, set up markets and fairs, coin money, exact tallage and other rights, etc., create judges and rectors to whom the people will be subject, both those people who convert and those who do not; and the brothers may lay down good usages and customs and hold assize and make statutes to strengthen the believers and keep the peace.[56]

This declaration by the Holy Roman Empire effectively allowed the Teutonic Order to conquer its own lands, create currency, and rule the land that they conquered rather than have to give it to other lords or the church. The Holy Roman Empire enabled the Teutonic Order to separate itself from the authority of the papacy and the church, by allowing it to become a self-governed territory. The bull sanctioned the Teutonic Order to become an independent state: known as the Monastic State of the Teutonic Knights or the Ordenstat.[57]

The Golden Bull changed the course of the Teutonic Order and its mission in the Baltic entirely. Instead of having to rely solely on other countries to fund and support their Order campaigns, the Order, with its own state, had its own taxes and merchants to create their own sources of income and towns from which to levy soldiers. The Order now also created its own treaties and made its own combat decisions, instead of relying on decisions of the ruler in whatever country they were involved, like Masovia where they had to follow the duke's authority.

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[55] The Duke of Masovia reneged on the agreement after noticing the amount of power the Order had amassed within his own borders.
[56] "Golden Bull of Rimini."
[57] Urban, *The Teutonic Knights*, 36.

One example of this reliance had previously occurred in Hungary in 1222. King Andrew II of Hungary responded to his failing power by reluctantly passing the Golden Bull of 1218-1222.[58] This Golden Bull is different from the Golden Bull of Rimini, as it was only called the Golden Bull for the detailing on the document itself. According to the 1218-1222 Bull, "If foreigners come to the country they shall not be elevated to dignitaries without the consent of the council of the realm; land shall not be given to those who are strangers of the realm."[59] This bull relieved the Teutonic Order of any obligations or rights to operate in the Kingdom of Hungary, as the nobles had effectively restrained the authority of King Andrew II in matters of state. In this matter King Andrew II had very little choice, as the nobles were threatening civil war in favor of his son, if the Bull was not endorsed. Until the Bull of Rimini in 1226, the Teutonic Order had no guarantee of operating in any given region for a meaningful duration of time, before being expelled due to their completing what their host country had expected of them. In this case, the expulsion of Cumen tribes in Hungary, which had become a local threat to the local nobility on Hungary's eastern borders. After the formation of the Ordenstaat, the Teutonic Order could operate without such constraints.

This political independence allowed the Teutonic Order to associate with people of different religious standing, mainly the Orthodox Christians. The Latin Christians were not the only nations involved with the conversion of the Baltic region; the Orthodox Christians of Novgorod were active in the region as well. The *Chronicle of Novgorod* describes the relationships between the Orthodox Novgorod and the other powers in the Baltic region, with the Novgorod's state and secular leaders initially considering the Teutonic Order in the region as an

[58] Vambery, *Story of Hungary*, 130.
[59] Vambery, *Story of Hungary*, 131.

asset. "In this year the Nemtsy [Germans] came from beyond sea to Riga, and all united here . . . the men of Pleskov sent aid. . . and they went against the godless Litva [Lithuanians]. . ."[60] The Rus of Novgorod also intended to pacify the pagan raiders on their western border, eliminating or converting the pagan tribes in order to improve trade routes between the East and West.

However, with the conversion of the Baltic region, these friendly relations between the Order and Novgorod and its allies in the Hanseatic League soon became hostile. The Hanseatic League was a group of towns that over the twelfth through fourteenth centuries banded together in a trading consortium.[61] The main goal of the League was to obtain trading agreements with the other members of the league that were mutually beneficial to each respective town. While not all of the Hanseatic League joined with Novgorod, many league cities became enemies with the Order, mainly because of their different sects of Christianity but also because of tension over who would control the now conquered Baltic regions of Prussia and Lithuania.

While the relationship with Novgorod ultimately soured, initially the Teutonic Order--as an autonomous state--was able to form alliances with an Orthodox nation to help expedite its own goal, the conversion of the Baltic. This alliance was essential; although Order was strong in the Baltic, it could only take on so many enemies at one given time. The Roman Church disapproved of this type of relationship with Novgorod; however, because of the Order's increasing independence, it was able to make this alliance without concern about papal intervention.

Political Ties between the Teutonic Order and the Papacy

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[60] *Chronicles of Novgorod*, 22.

[61] Ernst Daenell, "The Policy of the German Hanseatic League Respecting the Mercantile Marine." *The American Historical Review* 15, no. 2 (1909): 48. http://www.furthark.com/hanseaticleague/documents/Ernst_Daenell-Mercantile_Marine.pdf.

Having this close relationship with the Holy Roman Empire was dangerous for the Teutonic Order. As a monastic military order, its first loyalty should have been unquestioningly to the church. While having close ties to a secular authority is common for monastic orders, in the early thirteenth century the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy had been in a power struggle, vying over who had authority over the other. The relationship with the Holy Roman Empire for the Order was risky because it obtained most of its power as well as purpose through the Church as it used the Church's rules and morals in the way it operated. If the Order lost the support of the papacy, then it would have effectively failed to remain a monastic order.

This balance of power was most at risk because of the way in which the Emperor Friedrich II was being punished by the church in the form of his excommunication, meaning that he was in all ways cut off from his religion as well as Christendom and heaven. Despite the Order's need for both the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, relations between the two institutions were strained. This issue is best described through letter between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. During the Council of Lyons in 1245, the pope issued a writ of excommunication to anyone involved with Emperor Friederich II: "We absolve forever all who owe him alliegence in virtue of an oath of fealty.... Whoever shall in future afford him advice, help or goodwill as if he were Emperor or king, shall fall 'ipso facto' under the binding force of excommunication."[62] This enmity that the papacy had for the Holy Roman Empire was due to the Emperor not acknowledging the power of the papacy as well as multiple occasions where the Emperor agreed to crusade, but failed to be present when he agreed. A decree of excommunication required the rest of the Christian community to shun and ban the

[62] Daenell, "Hanseatic League," 49.

excommunicant in all daily and political aspects.[63] Emperor Friedrich II was neither the first or last European leader to be excommunicated by the papacy.

Despite his excommunication, the Order, under the leadership of Herman von Salza, was able to maneuver itself through the politics and act as a mediator between the two medieval superpowers. Urban explains Von Salza's efforts, noting that "Herman was evidently acutely aware that his Order, as a religious and imperial institution, sat uneasily on this political fault-line and was highly dependant upon both for patronage and protection."[64] This balancing was most apparent when Salza reconciled the Pope and the Emperor in 1230 with the treaty of San Germano.[65] It is because of this renewed communication between both the Emperor and the Pope that the Teutonic Order was able to create the Ordenstat, its own recognized, autonomous monastic military state.

The Order also had issues with the church in Rome. When the Teutonic Order was on crusade in the Baltic, often their actions came under the purview of the church, and letters condemning the Order were sent back to the papacy. The Order, to keep such actions from interrupting their operations in the Baltic, often sent a liaison to Rome to disprove any false rumors. According to Christiansen, "when the Prussian Brothers deviated from papal policy, there was usually someone in Rome to deny awkward rumors, correct misunderstandings, and put in a word at the right moment."[66] This strategy allowed the grandmaster of the Teutonic Order to remain focused on the crusade in the Baltic, allowing the Order to operate largely without interruption or backlash from the church for any questionable actions taken on crusade.

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[63] S.J Allen, *The Crusades: A Reader* (New York: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 284.
[64] Morton, *The Holy Lands,* 84.
[65] Morton, *The Holy Lands*, 77.
[66] Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*, 84.

The Church in Rome was already rife with different groups harboring different agendas and beliefs as explained by Lynch.[67]

Having a liaison to deny rumors in Rome demonstrated that the Teutonic Order was trying to keep itself from the politics in Rome, to distance itself from the authority that the papacy had over the Order so that it might operate by itself with little to no supervision in the Baltic. These decisions by the Order were taken out of practical necessity to fuel the conquest of the region, rather than actions made for purely selfish gain on the part of the Order. The Order in the Baltic had difficulties with members of the church in charge of the Baltic region. As stated earlier by Fonnesberg-Schmidt and Klavins, the church in the Baltic region had many disputes with the Teutonic Order over regional authority, with members of the church making charges against the Order directly to the papacy in Rome.[68]

Despite this hindrance to the Order, many members of the church in the Baltic actually sent letters to clear up situations that may have been twisted by church officials to make the Order look like a villain in the region. One of these groups were the Franciscans of Thorn, in response to claims that the Order was ignoring papal authority in the Baltic region in 1258. The Franciscans asserted that, "they are not slow in carrying out papal commands, since they honour the Holy Roman Church as lord and master, love its messengers and observe imperial orders in all their deeds especially those made with Papal approval."[69] The episcopal leadership of the church in the Baltic was not universally accepted, as members of the church were actively writing to disprove their leaders in regards to the Teutonic Order.

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[67] Joseph H. Lynch, *The Medieval Church a Brief History* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 1992), 208.
[68] In the historiography section, refer to pages 2-3.
[69] "Summary of the complaints of Bishop Christian against the Teutonic Order," Internet Medieval Sourcebook, Fordham University, accessed April 27, 2019, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/12-13Cbalticcrusade.asp#_Toc378084757.

Although the Order may have leaned towards a more independent stance, many influences of the church still helped shape the Teutonic Order in the Baltic region. While Christiansen and Ekdahl described the independence of the Order in the Baltic, Lynch explains how the idea of Christendom heavily influenced the rising crusader fervor in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, directly fueling the Teutonic Order in the Baltic. This fervor was supported by the rising belief that no individual who was a part of Christendom was an "outsider" and therefore not to be trusted.[70] This frame of mind is exemplified in letter during the Sixth Crusade in 1256. A knight named Guy declared, "we can expect neither good faith from the perfidious, nor humanity from the inhuman, nor charity from dogs, unless God, to whom nothing is impossible, works this miracle. It is He who has purged the Holy Land from the wicked Charismians."[71] Christians viewed any not of the same religion as akin to dogs. This mentality relates to the Baltic, as anyone not a member of the Roman or Latin Christianity (as the Order was perceived) was viewed as either a soul in need of saving, or a threat to Christendom that must be destroyed. The Order relied on the church to bring recruits and resources as much as it did its own capacities and connections.

The Order, through the influence of both the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy, forged itself into its own theocratic state. By navigating the fine line between both powers and acting as the mediator, the Order was able to keep each side from violence. At the same time, the Teutonic Order used the resources and prestige of both powers to expand itself in growth, military might, and influential circles.

Conclusion

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[70] Lynch, *The Medieval Church*, 161.
[71] "Guy, A Knight, to B. of Chartres," Internet Medieval Sourcebook, Fordham University, accessed May 2, 2019, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/1249sixthcde-let.asp.

During the Baltic Crusades the Teutonic Order was intertwined between its responsibilities to both the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy. These influences affected their relationships with the indigenous peoples as well as other Christian forces operating in the Baltic. These political ties allowed for the Teutonic Order first to become involved with the Baltic as a form of military assistance. The Teutonic Order, being a political and military force, utilized the influence granted to it as an institution by the papacy via papal bull. This authority enabled the Teutonic Order to become the predominant power in the Baltic region, relative to the two other great monastic military orders and the Holy Roman Empire.

The Teutonic Knights, as a force in the Baltic, endured complicated relations with the indigenous peoples in Teutonic territory and on campaign. The Teutonic Knights committed actions in the Baltic that were unfavorable towards any peoples in the Baltic. These actions included torture, rape, and plundering of Christian churches in newly converted regions. These knights were not representative of the entirety of the Teutonic Order. On the whole, the Teutonic Order acted as a stabilizing force in the Baltic creating forts to protect not only large towns but the small towns in the country as well. The Order also trained the people to defend themselves through knight advocates and brought in new trade routes to the newly converted peoples of the Baltic through Christianity.[72]

The Teutonic Order had complicated allegiances to both the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. These political relationships became more complicated when the Order became its own state. Because of these ties political disputes and conflicts between the members of the church and the Teutonic Order occurred in the Baltic.[73] Despite the complexity, these alliances were

[72] Urban, *The Teutonic Knights*, 22.
[73] Urban, *The Teutonic Knights*, 36.

essential to the success of the Order in the Baltic Crusades. Prior to the crusades in the Baltic, it was political power from the Holy Roman Empire that led to the creation of the Teutonic Order as a monastic military order. Additionally diplomacy was essential as the Teutonic Order during Baltic Crusade required soldiers and knights from other countries.[74] Despite the numerous shortcomings of the Teutonic Order, the influences of the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire enabled the Order to not only become the predominant power in the Baltic Crusades but also a means by which to protect the people from pagan threats.

[74] Urban, *Baltic Chivalry*, 519.

Appendix

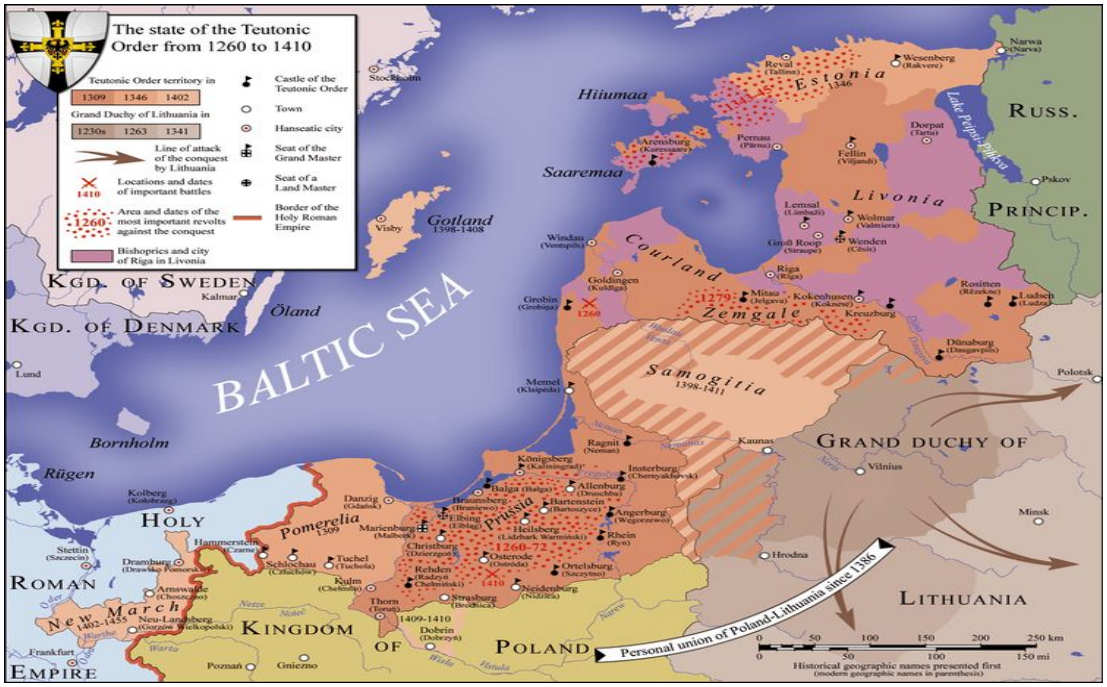

Figure 1: Map of the Baltic Region and Teutonic Order
https://www.ancient.eu/image/9295/northern-crusades-1260-1410-ce/

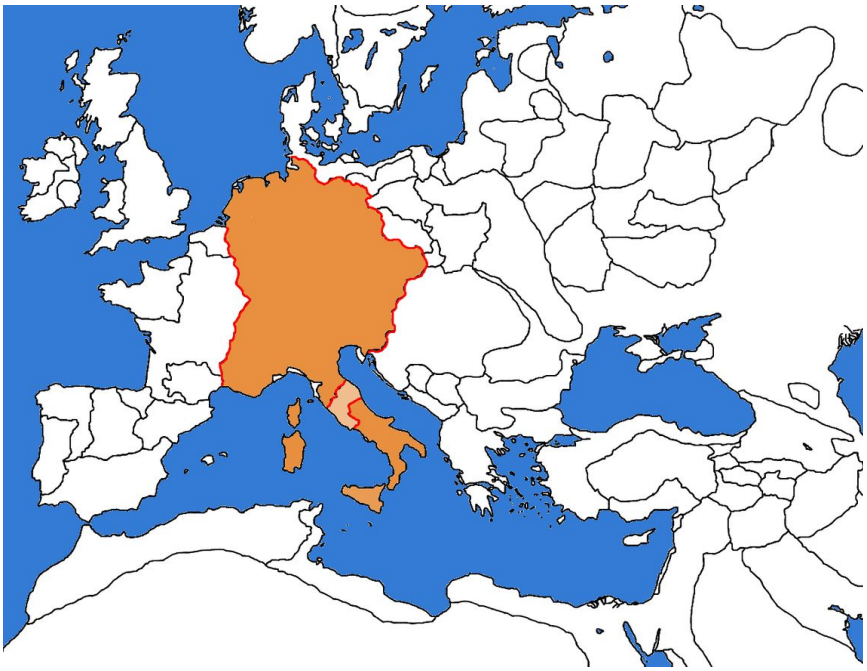

Figure 2: Territories of Holy Roman Empire and papacy
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Holy_Roman_Empire_at_it%27s_peak_of_power!.png

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